From: Gail and Fred Follmer
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/18/02 12:41am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

In January 2000, we bought a new HP Office Jet printer. We were running Windows 98 and everything seemed to be okay. Some time passed and we, my wife and I, noticed that if we were on the internet and wanted to print some information, our PC would hang up (do nothing) until the print operation completed. We called HP support and they sent us a new/updated print driver - but they were not certain this would fix our system hang problem. It didn't. HP told us to contact Microsoft as they, HP, felt we had some sort of synchronization problem between the print buffering and the 98 operating system. We called Microsoft, its now late April, and Microsoft tells us that Windows 98 is not the 'currently supported' environment - we need to be on 98 Second Edition for supported assistance, unless we're willing to pay for support on 98. I ask how much will the support cost? Answer, 'don't know, it depends on how long it will take to resolve the problem, but that a minimum would apply. It was pointed out that Window 98SE only cost $99.00 and fixes many 98 base problems, plus it adds functional support and performance. So we buy 98SE and install it, now I have the same system hang problem and several other problems, but at least they, Microsoft technical support will talk to us free of charge. It's now July, we have various system problems/hangs, even when not attached/connected to the internet. Microsoft tells me we need to download Maintenance level 1, as it fixes many problems. I download and apply Service Level 1 and still have the same printer hang problem, plus a more severe problem that the system periodically hangs for no reason - it doesn't matter what we were trying to do (use the mouse, keyboard,
write a letter, search our data base, etc.). Finally in late September, Microsoft determines that I have incompatible levels of various modules within my system and I need to scrub everything and re-install Windows 98SE, then re-apply the SE maintenance package and see what happens - but Windows ME is highly recommended - especially for the home user who wants enhanced multi-media and internet functions. I don't know, more $$. Anyway, re-installing my system and everything seems to work. The problem, I was told, was that when I was using Windows 98 and the accompanied Microsoft Internet Explorer, then applied the first maintenance package to base Windows 98, I should have UN-INSTALLED Internet Explorer, then applied the maintenance, then re-installed Internet Explorer. I told them, hey, IE came bundled with 98 when I bought it and I had no choice about its installation nor were there any instructions to un-install IE before installing the Windows 98 maintenance package. My point, their bundling of IE with Windows98 is what caused the problem of me having incompatible module levels - after I applied the maintenance package. But because of the age of my system, I either had to pay for service or pay for an upgrade to 98SE, which didn't solve my problem. I think Microsoft should have been willing to do what they call "problem determination" to determine what the initial problem was (their problem, my problem, or HP's problem) regardless of what Microsoft Windows product and product level I was running. Then once they knew the problem, fee or free resolution could be discussed. My point, they are the only 'game' in town and you either do it their way or you don't. One thing for sure, If I had been running Netscape instead of MSN IE I would not have had the problem (we know this because my printer worked fine when connected to my daughter's PC). I don't know if I would have been running Netscape if IE didn't come with my system, but have you ever tried to un-install IE from your system??

Also I don't know if the above is what the anti-trust lawsuit is all about, but I think the whole issue of what's supported and for how long and what's the real problem should be determined before you tell an end-user customer, who's at your mercy, you have to pay for service.

For what its worth, I'm now running ME because I upgraded to an Intel P-IV processor so I had to go to

ME to get the function and performance. It's a circle that never ends. Pay me, pay me!

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PS: Here I am complaining, but I no longer have the documentation, HP or Microsoft problem and/or incident numbers, to support my grievance - but thanks for listening.